

REMARKS

These remarks are in response to the Office Action dated March 9, 2006. A three month extension of time is hereby requested to file this response. Authorization to charge Deposit Account No. 50-0951 for the appropriate fees is filed herewith.

At the time of the Office Action, claims 1-10 were pending in the application. In the Office Action, claim 10 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. Claims 1-10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a). The rejections are discussed in more detail below.

I. Rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph

Claim 10 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. In particular, the phrase "a predetermined reaction environment" was asserted not to describe or further limit the apparatus. Claim 10 has been amended accordingly, and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

II. Claim Rejections on Art

Claims 1-10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over European Patent Publication No. 1 236 505 to Filippi et al. Applicants believe that this reference has been cited in error, as it does not appear to be prior art to the present application. European Patent Publication No. 1 236 505 was published on September 4, 2002, and the present application has a priority date of August 27, 2002. The obviousness rejection thus appears to be moot, and it is believed that no comments thereon are necessary. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

II. Conclusion

Applicants have made every effort to present claims which distinguish over the prior art, and it is thus believed that all claims are in condition for allowance. Nevertheless, Applicants invite the Examiner to call the undersigned if it is believed that a telephonic interview would

Appln. No. 10/648,894

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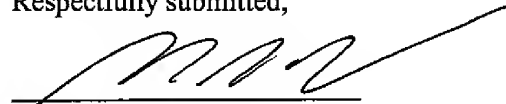
Amendment

Reply to Office Action dated March 09, 2006

expedite the prosecution of the application to an allowance. In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and prompt allowance of the pending claims.

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Respectfully submitted,



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